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THE GIRL BENEATH THE CHERRY TREES

HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND

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BY

HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND

NEW YORK

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A young lady is here represented walking against the wind which is blowing the cherry blossoms about her, and which are clinging to her robes. The carving is by the late Kodo Asahi, a resident of Tokio, and in his lifetime under the patronage of The Imperial Household. Kodo is the family name, Asahi the given name, which, as is usually the case, has a fanciful meaning. Asa means Morning, and Hi, Light; together, 'Asahi'—The Morning Light. The carving was a Fine Art Exhibit in Tokio in the fall of 1899.

THE GIRL BENEATH THE CHERRY TREES

To what far bourne of utter joyousness
Is she addrest—this wind-encircled maid
Of old Japan? Whence comes she;
from what tryst
Of whisper'd hopes that leave upon her lips
The smile we cannot fathom? Does she dream
Of one to whom her beauty is the peace
Of temple bells at even? Or do yet
No fancies stir the gentle heart of her,
Nor mist her eyes when dawn-flush
wakens her
With promise of the golden things to be?

I sense the scene about her. Overhead
Dear trees are bending, and their petals fall
Like blessings on the limbs that flash
their way
Above the yielding grasses. Here and there
They cling like fragrant, rosy messengers,
All-loth to leave her; and an upraised arm
Shields from the breeze a face so delicate
That surely somewhere from the orchard peer
Gnarl'd faces at her—spirit presences
Who loved, long years ago, such joy,
such innocence.

The gentler grace of dead and gentler days
Haunts us the while in memory again
We strive to live them, watching her who is
The Past and yet the Present. We must fade
Like breath from off the surface of a glass,
But she shall live forever; other eyes
Shall someday smile upon her; other lips
Shall tell her praise, and question, as we do,
Whence comes she, whither wanders.
They shall change
To things invisible, but she shall smile.

Pass on, blest maid, fair seeker of the quest
The sun has seen these ages. Never we
May know if loved thou art, or if alone
Thou pressest onward. But thy grace shall be
To us a promise of white things to come,
Of dreams to be fullfill'd; and if not here,
Then otherwheres. For when on
Beauty's face
We see the Light, we know that
somewhere shines
A rare effulgence, in whose heart at last,
Our little labors done, we shall find peace.

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